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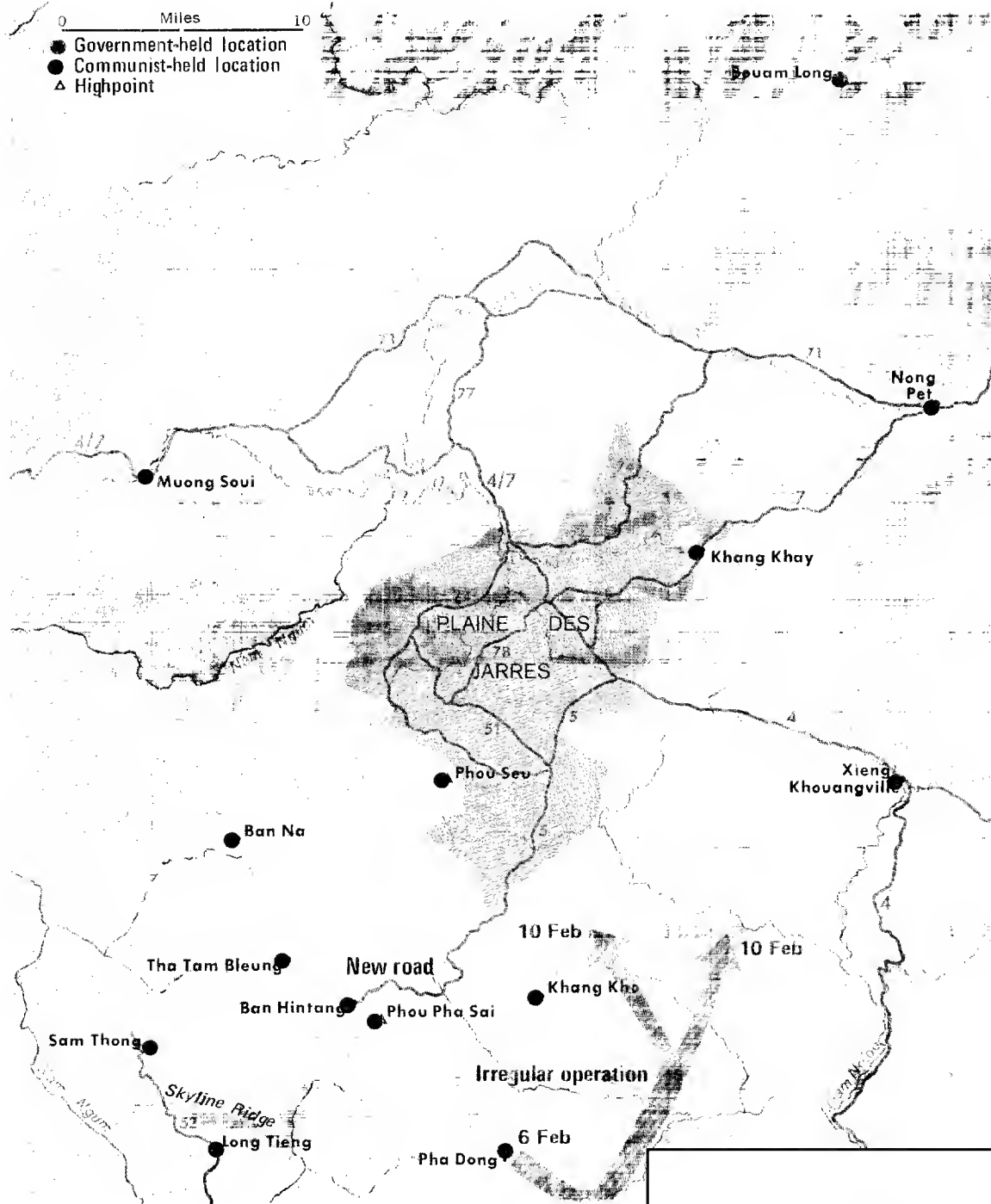
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LAOS: PLAINE DES JARRES AREA



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LAOS: Vang Pao's irregulars are moving deeper into the enemy's rear areas south of the Plaine des Jarres.

Forward elements of one task force are now about three miles from the southern tip of the Plaine, and other units are farther to the south and east. Little resistance has so far been encountered, presumably because the irregulars have not yet moved into any vital areas.

Vang Pao clearly believes that at this juncture the best defense is a good offense. Rather than digging in at Long Tieng for a costly head-on struggle with the attacking North Vietnamese, he has chosen to divide his 12,000-man force, leaving a 7,000-man contingent to defend Sam Thong and Long Tieng and sending the remainder to probe deeply toward the enemy's lines of communication. Vang Pao hopes to recapture the initiative and rekindle the fighting spirit of his troops, while forcing the North Vietnamese to divert their forces from the front lines to protect their supply corridors.

The operation is, however, a calculated risk. It could so weaken Vang Pao's offensive force that its future usefulness would be impaired should the operation fail to reduce the pressure on Long Tieng. Moreover, the Communists could attempt to take advantage of the reduced government strength around Long Tieng and Sam Thong to move quickly against them.

Several indicators suggest that the North Vietnamese may have nearly completed their preparations for new attacks. Enemy reconnaissance and patrol activity has increased both at Sam Thong and along Skyline Ridge. The new road from the southern edge of the Plaine to Ban Hintang reportedly is motorable, promising to reduce supply difficulties and making it possible to move heavy artillery closer to the base.

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[Much will now depend on whether the irregulars can move with speed and purpose to stir up enough trouble in the rear to divert the North Vietnamese before they can launch an all-out attack on Long Tieng and Sam Thong.

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USSR-EGYPT: The Soviets would like to revive the four-power talks and the Jarring mission in order to reduce pressures on Egyptian President Sadat.

The Deputy Chief of the Soviet Foreign Ministry Near East Division, Ye. D. Pyrlin, told a US Embassy officer on 9 February that while the USSR and Egypt lacked specific proposals for a resumption of Jarring's activities, Soviet UN Ambassador Malik would be sounding out his four-power colleagues on the matter. The Soviets have long favored a resumption of the four-power talks, although Pyrlin suggested it was Sadat's idea.

It appears that neither Moscow nor Cairo wants to close any possible door to an initiative for a political settlement. Pyrlin did not even foreclose the possibility that Sadat could eventually agree to entering "proximity" talks with Israel.

The Soviets continue to play for time. In addition to hoping that their diplomatic initiative can take the heat off Sadat, the Soviets are pointing to the visit of President Nixon to Moscow in the spring as an opportunity for progress in negotiations. Pyrlin noted that the Soviet leaders had told Sadat that the Middle East would be discussed with the President.

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USSR: The Soviet party's leading journal, Kommunist, has strongly underlined Brezhnev's role as the principal advocate of detente within the leadership.

The journal's editorial last month evidently was intended to provide high-level functionaries with a public definition and justification of Soviet detente policy in Europe and Brezhnev's foreign policy role. The need for such high-level guidance was indicated last December when the leadership undertook a round of speeches in the provinces to answer questions engendered by Soviet activities abroad in the past year.

The editorial credits Brezhnev with promoting detente through his talks with Pompidou and Brandt. The basis for this policy, according to Brezhnev, is the ascendancy of "forces of realism" in capitalist countries and Europe's resulting "shift" from a cold war era to one of peaceful coexistence.

The editorial does not associate Brezhnev's name with any passages critical of the US or its allies, while Podgorny and Kosygin are identified with Soviet support of North Vietnam against the US and Egypt against Israel. Moreover, after noting President Nixon's planned visit to Moscow, the article recalls that Brezhnev, as general secretary, met "directly" with the French president and the FRG chancellor, underlining that his party position is to be considered entirely suitable for dealing with Western heads of government.

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NATO: The allies are divided over how to deal with Moscow's continuing reluctance to receive the Brosio "explorer" mission on force reductions.

On 9 February the Canadians reported to the North Atlantic Council (NAC) that their ambassador in Moscow found Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko notably cool toward the prospect of receiving Brosio. A Soviet diplomat in Washington also reportedly told a Canadian diplomat that Brosio would not be received in Moscow. The remarks of other Soviet diplomats, however, reflect instructions not to place Moscow on record with a definite refusal.

The Soviet position poses a dilemma for NATO. France, Norway, and Denmark, concerned that the force reduction question could delay a Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) urge that the Soviets not be confronted on the issue. A number of others, supported by Secretary General Luns, want to issue a public statement that would make it clear that the Soviets are holding up the force reduction dialogue. They do not, however, want to give Moscow an opportunity to suggest an alternative, in view of the fact that the Soviets probably would propose either bilateral discussions with the US or postponement of force reduction talks until after a CSCE. Either course would diminish the chances of dealing with military security issues at a CSCE.

The allies will meet with Brosio next week to consider the status of his mission. Brosio [redacted] probably [redacted] would be amenable to scrapping the mission if, in the process, the onus could be placed on Moscow. [redacted]

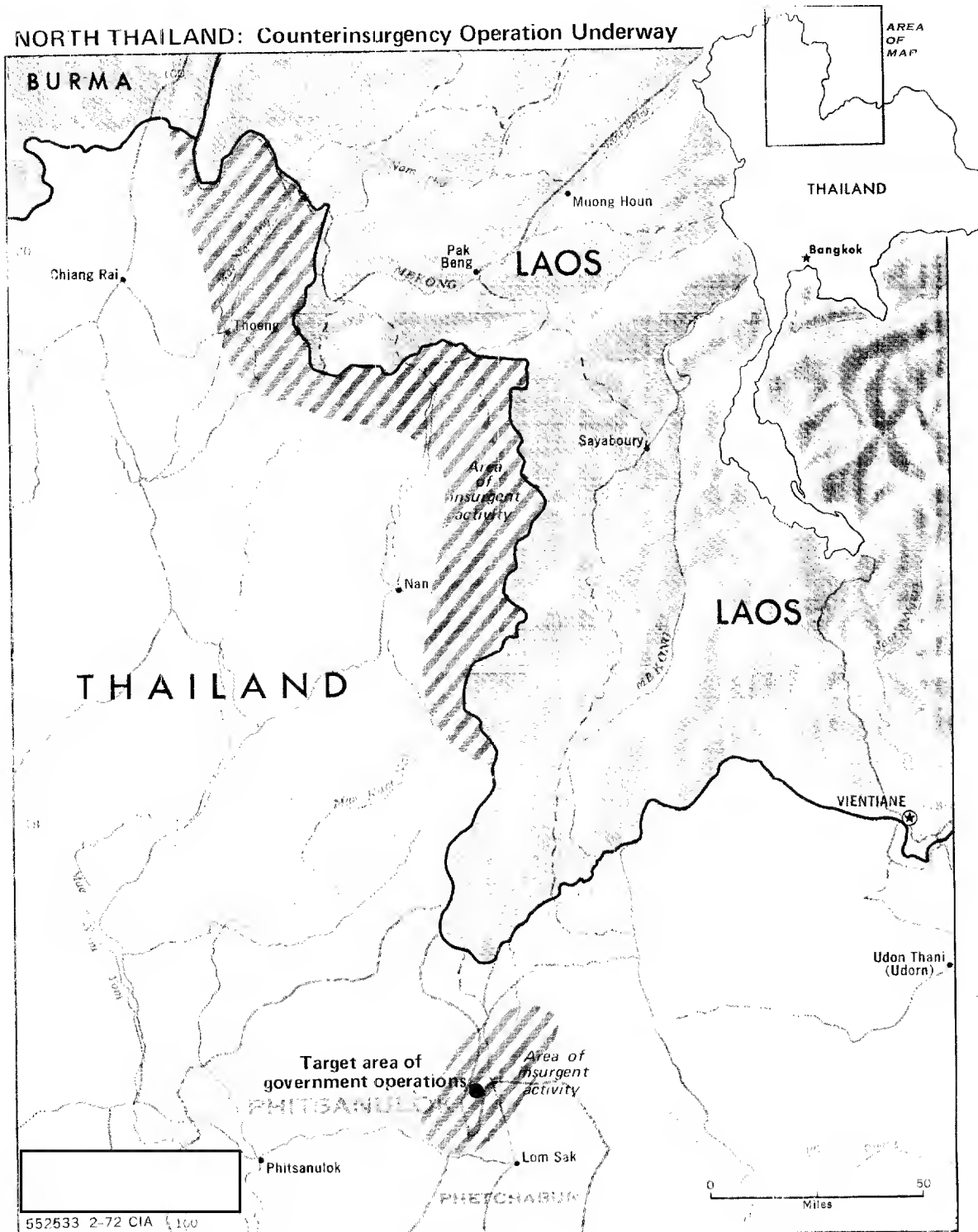
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NORTH THAILAND: Counterinsurgency Operation Underway



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THAILAND: Government troops have run into stiff opposition as they conduct the most ambitious military operation yet undertaken in the seven-year struggle against Communist insurgents.

The operation, begun on 20 January, involves the use of 12,000 troops, including elements from the elite Bangkok-based First Division. It is supported by five artillery batteries and an unprecedented number of tactical aircraft. The target is a mountain massif along the borders of Phitsanulok and Phetchabun provinces in northern Thailand, where the Communists have over 600 armed men, mostly Meo tribesmen. This is the closest Communist base to the central plains and has been the scene of heavy fighting in the past. Blocking positions have been established to the north within Thailand and across the border in Laos by irregular forces, but the insurgents are showing little inclination to withdraw from the target areas. Forewarned about the operation, they have constructed fortified positions and cached supplies for a two-month siege. The insurgents have been giving ground grudgingly, and the government troops, hampered by the rugged terrain, have not been able to reach their objectives.

Recognizing the importance of the operation, which is part of a wider campaign planned this year against insurgent strongholds, Bangkok has extended it until at least 25 February. Even if the government does not achieve all of its objectives, it has regained some of the initiative from the insurgents, and the operation provides tangible evidence that the leaders in Bangkok are willing to do more than they have in the past to combat the insurgency.

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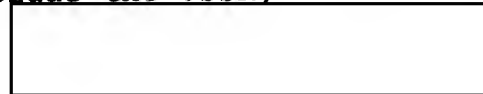
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BRAZIL-CHILE: The Brazilian Government probably will provide a large credit to Chile to finance the export of 1,000 Mercedes Benz buses manufactured in Sao Paulo.

Brazilian Government officials say that a decision on whether to extend the credit is still pending, but a Mercedes Benz employee has said privately that the contract has been signed and that he expects the government to provide major assistance in financing the deal. Chilean newspapers report the credit will be for \$18 million.

Although Brasilia remains totally opposed to the Allende government's political course, these ideological differences are likely to be overcome by the desire to promote exports, particularly of manufactured products. In pursuit of this end, Brazil currently is working hard to expand markets; targets of this campaign include the USSR, Eastern Europe, and Communist China.



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NOTE

JORDAN: Further changes are likely in the government in the wake of Wednesday's cabinet shuffle. Although King Husayn brought eight technocrats into the government in his attempt to find officials who can deal effectively with the country's mounting domestic problems, he still has to find a new prime minister. He reportedly has postponed this task until Jordan's future relations with other Arab states become clearer. Rumors circulating in Amman during late January indicate that, when the new prime minister is finally named, Husayn may also make some long-considered changes in the military and other non-cabinet posts.

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